1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

CHAPTER XXX.

PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS.

BY these names I mean to distinguish the good and honest practitioners who are in the habit of curing and healing diseases and wounds, by the simple application of natural remedies, without any mixture of superstition in the manner of preparing or administering them. They are very different from the doctors or jugglers, of whom I shall speak in the next chapter. In one point, only, they seem to participate in their ridiculous notions, that is, in the different manner, which I have already noticed, of drawing water up or down the current of a stream, as it is to be respectively employed as a vehicle for an emetic or a cathartic. This singular idea prevails generally among the Indians of all classes. They think that as the one remedy is to work upwards and the other downwards, care should be taken in the preparation to follow the course of nature, so that no confusion should take place in the stomach or bowels of the patient.

With this only exception the Indian physicians are perhaps more free from fanciful theories than those of any other nation upon earth. Their science is entirely founded on observation, experience and the well tried efficacy of remedies. There are physicians of both sexes, who take considerable pains to acquire a correct knowledge of the properties and medical virtues of plants, roots and barks, for the benefit of their fellow men. They are very careful to have at all times a full assortment of their medicines on hand, which they gather and collect at the proper seasons, sometimes fetching them from

1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
NM7 Delaware NM7

759 the distance of several days' journey from their homes, then they cure or dry them properly, tie them up in small bundles, and preserve them for use. It were to be wished that they were better skilled in the quantity of the medicines which they administer. But they are too apt, in general, to give excessive doses, on the mistaken principle that "*much of a good* thing must necessarily do much *good*."

Nevertheless, I must say, that their practice in general succeeds pretty well. I have myself been benefited and cured by taking their emetics and their medicines in fevers, and by being sweated after their manner while labouring under a stubborn rheumatism. I have also known many, both whites and Indians, who have with the same success resorted to Indian physicians while labouring under diseases. The wives of Missionaries, in every instance in which they had to apply to the female physicians, for the cure of complaints peculiar to their sex, experienced good results from their abilities. They are also well skilled in curing wounds and bruises. I once for two days and two nights, suffered the most excruciating pain from a felon or whitlow on one of my fingers, which deprived me entirely of sleep. I had re-
[757] course to an Indian woman, who in less than half an hour relieved me entirely by the simple application of a poultice made of the root of the common blue violet.

752 Indeed, it is in the cure of external wounds that they particularly excel. Not only their professional men and women, but every warrior is more or less acquainted with the healing properties of roots and plants, which is, in a manner, indispensable to them, as they are so often in danger of being wounded in their engagements with the enemy. Hence this branch of knowledge is carried to a great degree of perfection among them. I firmly believe that there is no wound, unless it should be absolutely mortal, or beyond the skill of our own good practitioners, which an Indian surgeon (I mean the best of

It was then they came to tell me what my mission on earth was to be. Since everyone has a purpose in life, mine was to heal the sick. Whenever I dreamed a secret I told my mother and she told me to keep this to myself until I became older. Now as I get older, I feel that I shall be better known in years to come. I am confident that my dream-vision power will bring me success throughout life since the Creator does not abandon his children to whom he had entrusted such gifts. By this I have learned to work out my own salvation, knowing that the Indian wholly depends upon the talent allotted to him by the Creator. These experiences fully qualify me to lead in the Big House if I choose to do so. My brothers do not know this but they suspect that I have a vision to relate. Some day they may have the pleasure of hearing it when the opportunity offers.

Delaware Practitioners

Delaware herbalists are of two classes:[6] (1) "one who knows [medicine] well" and (2) "one who uses medicine for magic purposes."[7] It is believed that to the former is entrusted the knowledge of the healing properties of plants as well as the methods of preparing and administering them as medicine. These practitioners are usually women

[6] Heckewelder (1876, p. 228) refers to the herbalists as "physicians and surgeons" and says in part: "By these names I wish to distinguish the good and honest practitioners who are in the habit of curing and healing diseases and wounds, by the simple application of natural remedies, without any mixture of superstition in the manner of preparing them." Zeisberger (*op. cit.* p. 24) does not classify the Indian doctors but writes, "There are Indians who have considerable knowledge of the virtue of roots and herbs, learned from their fathers, and who bring about relief."

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 231. Heckewelder, in discussing this type has chosen to call them "doctors or juggler," for which he gives the following reasons: "These men are physicians, like the others of whom I have spoken, and like them are acquainted with the properties and virtues of plants, barks, roots and other remedies. They differ from them only by their pretensions of a superior knowledge. As the Indians in general believe in witchcraft, and ascribe to the arts of sorcerers many of the disorders with which they are afflicted in the regular course of nature, this class of men has risen up among them who pretend to be skilled in a certain occult science, by means of which they are able not only to cure natural diseases, but to counteract or destroy the enchantments of wizards or witches, and expel evil spirits."

759 but occasionally a man is blessed with a vision [8] in which the Creator bestows upon him this great gift, and like Witapanóxwe, he becomes an herbalist. In addition to the knowledge of healing acquired through his guardian Spirit,[9] the informant has also followed carefully the teachings of his mother who was recognized by Delaware of the older generation as one adept in the art of compounding and administering herbal remedies.

791 The second class is composed of individuals whose supernatural power enables them to perform acts such as reuniting an estranged couple or dispelling a supposedly evil charm. Certain rare plants are employed by them in practices resorted to only in emergencies.

It must be emphasized here that, according to Delaware belief, the practitioners are the medium through whom the Creator sends his healing power to alleviate distress caused by the physical and mental ills which attack the frail bodies of mankind.

Absolute faith in the unfailing power and benevolence of the Creator is the force which inspires the Delaware who has been blessed with a medicine vision and he is ever appealing in prayer to that higher Spiritual Force for aid in his professional undertakings.

824 825 Believing that plants and animals in general are closely related to mankind [10] and that the Creator has endowed them individually with spiritual natures equally as sensitive as our own, the Delaware herbalist is always careful to perform the formal propitiatory rites before gathering a plant or removing part of an animal for use in making medicine.

759 824 782 278 If a practitioner is called upon to treat a person during the growing season in spring or summer, his first move, after the formal acceptance of the case and receipt of a gift of tobacco, is to go out and seek a plant of the desired species to be used in making medicine for the treatment of the particular ailment. After coming upon the first plant

[8] Zeisberger *(op. cit.* p. 25) "Fancied skill and imagined ability to heal the sick are traced to dreams which these individuals may have had in their youth. To the dreams they appeal, for in them they have much faith." See also Speck, 1931, p. 51; Harrington, 1921, p. 61; and Benedict, 1923.

[9] Harrington (1921, p. 80) quoting from the notes of R. C. Adams, "It is believed by the Delaware that every one has a guardian spirit which comes in the form of some bird, animal, or other thing, at times in dreams and tells them what to do and what will happen. The guardian spirit is sent from the Great spirit."

[10] Speck (1931, pp. 28, 29) discusses the principle of consanguinity as applied to deities and nature-forces.

4: Tantaquidgeon E-5 (1930) 1942
NM7 Delaware NM7

278
759
782
824
[296]
[424]

of the variety required, he does not gather it [11] but performs a ritual to appease the Spirit of the plant. A small hole is dug towards the east near its base and a small quantity of native tobacco [12] placed within. The herbalist then lights his pipe and smokes, meanwhile making the following appeal to the Creator and to the Spiritual forces which govern vegetation. The songs and properties are regarded as personal property and the accompanying medicine-gathering prayer of Wi·tapa·nóxwe is regarded as typical.

MEDICINE GATHERING PRAYER (free translation)

782
539

"Grandfather, I come now for medical treatment. Your grandson (name of suppliant) needs your aid. He is giving you a smoke-offering here of tobacco. He implores you that he will get well because he, your child, is pitiful. And I myself earnestly pray that you take pity on him the sick one, I wish for him to get well forever of that which is causing pain in his body. For with you alone rests the spiritual power sufficient to bless anyone with, and hear now him our Grandfather tobacco, I beg of him that he will help me when we plead with earnest heart that you will take pity on your grandchild and that you will accept this appeal. I am thankful, Grandfather, also Creator, that you grant our appeal this day for all that we ask.[13] I am thankful, Grandfather. That is enough for this time."

278
759

Upon the conclusion of this propitiatory rite the medicine person searches out another plant of the same species, which if clean and healthy-looking, is then gathered. It is now ready to be treated in accordance with the rules governing the preparation of roots and herbs in the accompanying pharmacopeia. If the root of a plant is to be used in making medicine, it is gathered at the season when the vital properties are present; similarly the stalk or leaves each are gathered at the proper seasons.

[11] Harrington (1921, p. 26) in reference to the manitowuck to whom the Indians pray, says, "These are mentioned in the ritual of the Annual Ceremony and the people often pray to them when gathering herbs or preparing medicines, at the same time offering tobacco." He also says (p. 51) that, ". . . Some seem to have prayed to the four directions, other to the presiding genius of the species of the plants they sought or to the spirit of the individual plant itself."

[12] "Real tobacco" (Nicotiana rustica), to which a Delaware term meaning, "our grandfather," is also given.

[13] The proper phrase in full is, "give us what we ask for." It is abbreviated here to suit the formula.

278
759

The herbalist, before using herbs previously gathered and dried, performs the same rite of smoking and prayer. If the plants are being gathered for future rather than for immediate use, an appeal is made to the Creator to bless the plants and render the remedies effective in curing the future ills of his grandchildren.

[184]

The custom of offering prayers before the gathering and preparation of medicinal plants is not observed exclusively by the medicine men but is known to every Delaware. However, it was remarked that many fail to adhere to the ancient rite.

In observing Witapanóxwe I was charmed by the delicate and reverential manner in which he handled the plants secured and arranged for this study. At this time he emphasized the idea of conservation, stating that one should gather only what was needed, and that vegetation in general should not be subjected to ruthless treatment.

[577]
[823
784]

Purity means much to the conservative Delaware and so the pure plants, as taken from Mother Earth, must not be defiled. It is therefore important that in order to avoid contamination no metal should come in contact with plants that are to be used in the treatment of disease. Roots and plants are allowed to dry in the sun, its rays lending them added potency. In this connection it is considered highly beneficial for a convalescing person to lie directly in the sun, so that its strengthenings qualities may be transferred to him. After the process of curing, roots and leaves are prepared by crushing them in a non-metallic receptacle, a stone basin or a wooden mortar being used for the purpose.

[758]

[823]

The herbalist smokes and offers a prayer while the medicine is being prepared and is always careful to stir it in the same direction—from left to right. One should never blow upon the concoction to cool it; to do so would represent an affront to the spirit of the plant.

759

The most able practioner will not treat himself when ill, nor a sick member of his family, but always calls upon the service of another.[14]

If an herbalist or sweat doctor, after diagnosing a case, feels that it is beyond his power to effect a cure, he will send the patient to another more capable of treating him successfully. Sometimes a sick person

[14] Zeisberger (*op. cit.* p. 25) "If one should know enough to help himself, being able to prepare *Beson*, and became ill, he will rarely treat himself, having the superstitious belief that what is prepared by himself will be of no benefit. Using what has been prepared by another, he believes, will bring relief."

4:Tantaquidgeon E-5 (1930) 1942
NM7 Delaware NM7

will visit several doctors in succession before finding one who has knowledge of preparing a remedy for his particular illness.[18]

The person, either male or female, known by the term meaning "one who uses medicine for magic purposes," apparently had a larger number of patients in early times than the type of practitioner previously described. Zeisberger *(op. cit.,* p. 25), and Heckewelder *(op. cit.,* p. 231), from whom this impression is obtained, give rather detailed accounts of their seemingly weird practices. Both writers attribute the popularity of this group of healers to their feigned ability of dispelling the charms of evil sorcerers whom the Indians constantly feared. Witapanóxwe clarifies the distorted impressions implicit in these accounts by his interpretation of the procedure employed in treatment. The herbalist was called upon to aid individuals who have experienced difficulty in their marital relations or who have tried unsuccessfully to win the favor of a lover. Others came to him to be freed from malevolent influences. His power was not, however, limited to the control of human beings but extended to animals as well. Such a person was truly a "powerful man." This great power was entrusted with the admonition that it must never be used for malevolent purposes. Like the group of practitioners previously mentioned, the code of such people was based upon profound faith in the Creator, strict observance of the laws of nature and a deep regard for the traditions of their tribe.

The plants employed by such an herbalist were of the rarest and most powerful kind. Their habitat and medicinal properties were not known to ordinary individuals. Such plants were unable to withstand the progress of civilization because, as my informant put it, "they could not live in unclean surroundings." The preparation made from these rare flora was known to the Delaware as "medicine for magic use," or "love medicine" (Zeisberger, *op. cit.,* p. 83). It was regarded as a gift, not to be used upon ordinary occasions but only in cases of emergency.

[18] Zeisberger (*ibid.,* p. 55) states that "Concerning plants and roots of medicinal value, it would be possible, if one were to devote himself to inquiry, to secure a great deal of information from the Indians for what one does not know another does, each man and woman having some knowledge in this direction, some more, some less. Hence, the custom that a patient who has consulted an Indian and secures a medicine from him without, however, being benefited, will go immediately to another; if no relief is obtained through his advice, the patient goes to a third, a fourth, until he finds one whose medicine helps."

757 cedure within the lodge for the purpose of diagnosing and treating sickness.

The term applied to the sweat house healer is one meaning a "sweat 756 doctor." He always performs within the lodge when asked to examine 757 or treat a patient. It is interesting to note that my informant, Wi·tapanóxwe, and Charley Elkhair, the present head chief of the Oklahoma Delaware, claim the distinction of being the only men among the Oklahoma Delaware who have supernatural sanction to perform in this capacity. The former believes that he is privileged to assume the role which his people consider appropriate only for men whose mind and character have been strengthened by years of experience but that up to the present time (1930) he has not attempted it. The powerful shamans[29] of an earlier period were said to have been able to perform miraculous feats and effect marvelous cures without the aid of the sweat lodge although it was frequently employed in their practices.

787 Both of the above types of medicinemen receive their power from 756 the Creator through dream-visions, the spiritual visitation occurring 759 usually just before sunrise or sunset. The vision is accompanied by a medicine song which becomes the personal property of the healer, to be sung during performances in the sweat lodge. It is said that women rarely became sweat doctors. Wi·tapanóxwe, since his vision and medicine song were received just before sunrise, considers that as the time of day during which he would be most successful in curing activities within the sweat lodge. Those who received their power at sunset accordingly regarded that as the most suitable time for performances.

Contrary to the herbalist's custom of not accepting gifts or payment for his services, the sweat doctor expects payment from those who approach him for consultation and treatment. In former times trader's trinkets, etc., and somewhat later, horses, blankets, and money were given by those requiring his services.

343 The construction and equipment of the sweat lodge are matters of considerable importance in this particular type of curing. It is built of twelve poles which represent the twelve levels of heaven (Speck, 1931, p. 74) and according to native belief, lead to the abode of the [772] Creator. For this purpose saplings chosen for their flexibility, are cut

[29] In Delaware the term used means "powerful man," "man who can heal," and refers to a type of shaman, called *medew* by the Delaware of an earlier period, especially concerned with curing. Among the Chippewa (Densmore, 1929, pp. 86-97) the *mide* were the leaders of the *mide'wiwin* or Grand Medicine Society. See also Hodge, 1912, p. 523.

right. It is never cooled by blowing upon it. Running water should be used, and it was customary in former times to dip the water with or against the current, or to submerge the container and allow the water to flow in from all sides.[1] 278

The term *"doctol,"* from English doctor, was the only term for an herbalist obtainable from those interviewed. It is also said both men and women could become practitioners. When calling upon a doctor for treatment it is customary to offer him a present of money. In former times, cloth, tobacco, and other gifts were offered. 759

GREAT MULLEIN *(Verbascum thapsus)*. 278 757

The leaves are crushed and applied as a poultice to bruised surfaces to reduce swelling and allay pain.

NANNYBERRY *(Viburnum lentago)* and mullein leaves are steeped and the tea administered in case of measles.

LIVE-FOREVER *(Sedum telephioides)*. [752]

The leaves are crushed and used as a poultice to draw out poison. My informant regarded this to be a most powerful and effective application. He stated that he had suffered from a serious case of infection which resulted from stepping on a rusty nail and that the above remedy cured him in a short while.

PLANTAIN *(Plantago major)*.

The leaves are crushed and applied to bruises.

BURDOCK *(Arctium minus)*.

The leaves are bound on the body to reduce pain. The root is used in making medicine for purifying the blood.

HORSERADISH *(Radicula armoracia)*.

The leaves are applied as a poultice in case of neuralgia.

BITTERSWEET *(Celastrus scandens)*.

The root is used for making medicine which is administered to persons suffering from consumption.

TANSY *(Tanacetum vulgare)*.

The plant is used in making medicine which is effective in treating disorders of the stomach.

[1] My informants could not explain this but said that the water must be dipped in different ways according to the nature of the disease to be treated. It is a common belief that water dipped *with* the current acts as a laxative and *against* it acts as an emetic. Allowing the water to flow into the container from all sides suggests the idea that the remedy to be made would tend to benefit the entire system.